

UCSD Faculty and Graduate Student Memories of Harris

Jay Cizeski, UCSD PhD Cohort Entering Fall 2019

Harris was one of the very first people I met in San Diego, and surely one of the first that I would come to call a friend. The day before our first year started and before I had met anyone at all, we went to a Padres game together, and there I was excited to learn he did Quiz Bowl in college like I did. We immediately started bonding over that, as well as being baseball fans, and it wasn't long before we were playing bar trivia regularly on a team together, with some victories under our belt too.

Harris always seemed to look at the world from a lens that was deep and thoughtful. He cared about cause and effect, about how policy affected the world, and how philosophy played a part in that. I always seemed to learn something new when talking to him. He was the kind of smart that you could recognize from across the room, who always had the right factoid when you needed it, or could talk you through a hard problem step by step and make it easy. He seemed to know about every issue out there, and had an opinion on them too - sometimes, I'd pick a random topic and pretend I had a stance just to pick his brain and see what he would argue. I'd do the same thing with anime - some which I'd seen and could talk about, and some which I hadn't but wanted to get a recommendation on.

I was fortunate enough that Harris even invited me to play a real quiz bowl tournament with him over zoom in the early days of the pandemic, and there I got to see the true presence he had in that community - not only in his trivia skills, but in the way competitors from all across the country knew him, either because they played with him or against him or just because they had become friends in passing at some competition or wherever. More importantly, everyone that knew him seemed to like him, and I was no exception. It wasn't hard to see why - Harris was someone you could always count on to get out and do something fun. It didn't matter when, or where, or who was going, he'd be there, and the night would be better for it.

I'll remember his tweets about obscure philosophers (which I never understood, but always got a kick out of anyway) and talking about why the Tigers just can't get it together. I'll remember our trip to Mexico when everyone was still just meeting each other and his surprising fondness for Mexican beer. Mostly, I'll remember him as a friend, and a good one at that. I'll miss him, especially as the cohort reaches milestones we know he would have been with us for. Nevertheless, I'm grateful that the two of us ended up in the same place at the same time here so we could meet. I know my life is better for it, and I'm only one of so many others who could say the same.

Jeff Clemens, UCSD Professor

I worked with Harris through the 1st year summer GSR program during the summer of 2020, then on into the fall before he first needed to spend time in the hospital. All of our meetings were on Zoom and we never had a chance to meet in person. It was a pleasure working with Harris and getting to know him to the extent to which I could. Harris struck me as being very careful in his work and came to meetings ready with questions about potential concerns with the analyses we were doing and potential ways we could improve and extend them. I was

excited about the prospects for continuing to work with Harris and to see the projects he would develop; and of course I had hoped to be able to do at least some of that in person. My thoughts are with his family.

Julie Cullen, UCSD Professor and Chair

I got to know Harris only virtually, when he took my remote public economics course during the pandemic. I remember him as being measured in his responses and very thoughtful and bright. In retrospect, from hearing the recollections from his peers, I realize that I misinterpreted some of his comments because I did not have the backdrop of knowing his dry sense of humor. Some of those specific memories now make me smile. I wish I had the opportunity to get to know him better, as I naturally would have, as he focused more on independent research during the next phase of the PhD. What a great loss for us all.

Cole Dreier, UCSD PhD Cohort Entering Fall 2019

Nearly every time I would walk into the commons in our first year, Harris would be there, and we would talk college sports or he would give me some little machine learning/probability tidbit that he had been doing recently. I talked to Jeff at the end of last year about a project the three of us could potentially work on, and I was really excited about getting started on that at some point this year, because Harris was such a relaxed, quietly intelligent person to be around. I'm sad I won't get the chance to work closer with him, and crushed for his family. I think any time I walk into the 1st year commons, I will still expect to see him at that same desk quietly working and listening to something.

I hope that thoughts and memories from his classmates and friends will help his family feel more connected to this part of his life.

Emily Fallick, UCSD PhD Cohort Entering Fall 2019

Early in our first year, Harris helped organize a trivia team that would attend trivia at Rock Bottom every week, no matter how busy and stressed out we were. It was a release for all of us, an excuse to take a break and think about something other than econ for an hour or two. He was seriously the backbone of our team, he even attended a trivia night over zoom from the hospital once. Living on the Edgeworth (our team) won't be the same without him.

Jeffrey Garland, UCSD PhD Cohort Entering Fall 2019

Harris embodied the qualities that anyone would want in a friend. His opinions and beliefs were thoughtfully considered, and his actions and dealings with everyone else were kind, fair, and thoughtfully considerate. He was always willing to help me (and many more than just me) when I needed it, no matter how small, without second thought. I cannot count the number of times we stared at the same problem on a chalkboard together, fumbled our way through a coding assignment together, or had a good laugh together. There is truly so much more that I feel that I'm missing but simply lack the ability to properly express, but this program will not be the same without him, and I know each and every member of our cohort will miss him. Harris Bunker was an excellent economist, an excellent friend, and an excellent man.

Radhika Goyal, UCSD PhD Cohort Entering Fall 2018

I can't find the words to say how sorry I am, and how much Harris will be missed. I only really conversed with Harris on two separate occasions, but immediately took to his quiet demeanor and dry sense of humour. It didn't take time to see how witty and brilliant he was. I believed there will be time to talk more after his quals. My heart goes out to his family.

Yashna Nandan, UCSD PhD Cohort Entering Fall 2019

I am so grateful to have gotten the chance to know Harris. I was particularly fond of his dry sense of humor, often delivering jokes with a deadpan expression and contributing memes to our group chat. He was also incredibly kind, always willing to explain a difficult math or coding problem to anyone who needed help. Harris was a truly valuable addition to our cohort and will be dearly missed by all of us.

Anjali Pai, UCSD PhD Cohort Entering Fall 2019

In May of 2021 I helped host an interdepartmental trivia night over Zoom. Before the pandemic, Emily, Jay, Harris and I were regulars at weekly bar trivia (under the team name "Living on the Edgeworth"). This was the first real opportunity we had to do trivia during the pandemic so we reached out to Harris to see if he wanted to get the team back together. I think we were all surprised when Harris literally Zoomed into this trivia night from his hospital bed. I think that's a really good representation of the kind of person Harris was. He was always willing and interested in doing things. He pretty much made it to every social event we threw during our first year, including my halloween party, our game nights, and the cohort Friendsgiving (picture attached). He was willing to do bar trivia pretty much anywhere in San Diego, and even over Zoom from his hospital bed.

Although I regrettably did not have too much opportunity to talk to him at that virtual trivia event in May, I do remember that even then, he was the same Harris I had always known. He seemed annoyed, more than anything, to be in the hospital - he talked about reading papers to keep himself busy. I remember him asking very specific clarifying questions about our trivia questions and offering to write questions for future trivia nights if we wanted (I was always amazed by his ability to write quiz bowl questions since that takes such an immense depth of knowledge). I'm really glad he was able to join us for that event because it gave us one more chance to really see Harris in his element, doing something he really enjoyed. That's how I would like to remember Harris: as someone who cared deeply about the things he enjoyed, who was always willing to spend time with his friends, who was brilliant but never made people feel inferior, and who really had this silent optimism through and through.



Photo from a group activity in September 2019



Thanksgiving celebration 2019



This might be my favorite picture of Harris. He's riding a horse and not looking terribly impressed by it which is, I think, pretty representative of Harris's personality. This picture makes me smile whenever I see it.



Dinner at a seafood restaurant - September 2019

Giacomo Rondina, UCSD Professor

I met Harris when he took my Macroeconomic Theory class in the Winter of 2020. Harris always sat in the front row. He regularly asked questions in class and was often attending my office hours. From his questions, it was clear to me that he was skeptical of the macroeconomic models that I was teaching. More importantly, it was also evident that he was a deep thinker, and I very much admired that about him. I always thought that if I could meet him intellectually at the place of healthy skepticism from which he was moving, I could succeed in making him appreciate macroeconomics a little more. I am not sure if that ever happened, but I certainly enjoyed the intellectual exchange that resulted from it. As teachers, our experience is often limited to the intellectual personality of our students, but over the last several days, hearing from Harris' graduate cohort friends, I learned that the attentive thinking he displayed in class carried over to his personal and social life. In his time at UCSD, Harris touched many lives, with his kindness, his generosity, and his sense of humor. I hope and pray that the memories of Harris and the love that he has spread in his life can be of comfort to his family, his friends, and all those that held him close.

Sit tibi terra levis, Harris.

Kevin Winseck, UCSD PhD Cohort Entering Fall 2019

I remember I sat next to Harris at the welcome lunch on our very first day at UCSD. I fondly recall great conversation about everything economics and technology, and really getting a great impression of him. Later, he was always a source of entertaining commentary on a variety of topics, and he had the admirable quality of never fearing to express himself. Harris was one of the smartest people I know, both in terms of his academics and his vast wealth of knowledge of random facts, a quality that led our team to victory in our first trivia night. I know trivia and Quiz Bowl meant a lot to him, so I was thrilled to have him join us from the hospital for another round of trivia against the Math and Electrical Engineering departments! It was fantastic to get the chance to connect with him again, and I know he had a great time. And it may seem like a small thing, but Harris gave me the template I use for all my presentation slideshows, so at the very least, his memory will live on in me every time I give a presentation. Harris was a bright young man and a great guy, and I know I speak for everyone in the department when I say that he will be incredibly missed, both as an economist and as a friend.

Steven Yee, UCSD PhD Cohort Entering Fall 2019

I first met Harris on the UCSD Economics PhD visit day in April 2019. I was blown away by how much he already knew about economics. And then I learned he was still an undergrad! He told me that he was almost definitely going to attend UCSD. I would later tell my friends how I didn't want to go to UCSD and get shown up by this annoyingly smart undergrad (I was 3 years out of undergrad). Fortunately, I can now say I am glad that Harris and I both ended up at UCSD together.

Harris stood out amongst our class for several reasons that I'm sure other classmates are sharing (e.g., his passion for economics, how hard he worked, his intelligence, etc.). For me, a different thing that stood out was his interest in the NBA. I think we were the only people in our cohort that actually followed basketball. It really was great to chat about the latest games or how terrible Blake Griffin and the Pistons were. Harris made the program feel a bit more like what I was used to back home.

My favorite memory of Harris is the one time we played basketball together. For whatever reason, we would always discuss basketball but never play despite a hoop being less than 5 minutes away from us on campus. Harris talked a big game about what a great shooter he was. He didn't claim to be the most athletic person in the world, but if someone had to hit a jumper with the game on the line, he said he was ready. So, we finally played basketball right before the pandemic started. I'm a terrible shooter so I can't really judge Harris...but he seemed more ready to take the shot than he was to make the shot. In fairness, we weren't dressed to really play basketball, so I didn't get to see him in action. Just talking and bricking shots together is a memory I won't forget. Harris will certainly be missed.